State of California
Department of Transportation

SCH Number: [*enter number*]
11-SD-15- PM 10.7-31.8
KP M17.2-M50.7

Negative Declaration

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (the Department) proposes to improve freeway capacity and transit opportunities on Interstate 15 (I-15) by enhancing both freeway and high occupancy vehicles (HOV) facilities. A strategy called Managed Lanes is being pursued to provide capacity for buses and carpools. In addition, if approved by FHWA, the value pricing program would be implemented under separate environmental approval and would allow single occupancy vehicles (SOV) to utilize excess capacity on the lanes. The managed lanes would be constructed mostly within the existing freeway median, though some outside widening is required. Some new right-of-way would be required for temporary construction easements, grading and drainage easements, retaining wall footing easements, and soil-nail and tieback easements. There would be no acquisition of homes or businesses. On the four proposed managed lanes, a moveable median barrier would be utilized that would allow for more traffic lanes in the peak direction. Traffic would flow in both directions with a minimum of one lane. Fixed concrete barriers would separate the managed lanes from the main lanes with access openings at two to three mile intervals. Five direct access ramps are also proposed. The work is located on I-15, , from 2.4 kilometers (1.49 miles) south of State Route 163 in the City of San Diego to 0.5 kilometers (0.31 mile) north of State Route 78 in the City of Escondido.

Determination

The Department has prepared an Initial Study for this project, and pending public review, will determine from this study that the proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

The proposed project would have no effect on land use, communities and neighborhoods, growth, employment, relocation and property acquisitions, air quality, historic and archaeological preservation, and hazardous waste.

In addition, the proposed project would have no significant effect on wildlife, floodplains, water quality, joint development, or parks and recreation.

The proposed project would have no significantly adverse effect on pedestrian and bicycle facilities, noise, wetlands and waters of the United States, threatened or endangered species, visual resources, or construction related impacts because the following mitigation measures would reduce potential effects to insignificance:

- To protect trail operations, construction equipment would mainly cross bike/pedestrian trails, at designated areas, in the early morning and late evening when there are fewer trail users.
- If equipment would be brought across open trails personnel and signs would warn users of the hazard.
- Temporary impacts to trails would be offset when structures are replaced with enhanced bicycle and pedestrian features including wider sidewalks and shoulders, lighting, and scored sidewalks.
- Wetlands and water areas would be avoided to the maximum extent practicable
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) and Limited Use Areas (LUA) would be designated on project plans. Other minimization measures would be adopted through Section 7 consultation and through the Section 404 permit review.
- Direct impacts to coastal sage scrub (CSS) habitat and coastal California gnatcatchers would be mitigated through the purchase of lands containing CSS and gnatcatchers. Parcels consisting of 93.65 hectares (231.43 acres) have been purchased in the unincorporated community of Sunnyside in southeast San Diego County (adjacent to Proctor Valley Road).
- At impacted receptors, sound barriers would be constructed where reasonable, to achieve a minimum 5 dBA reduction. .
- Construction noise control measures would include the following:

    - Near sensitive receptors, night work would be confined to a maximum of five consecutive nights at any given location. Between consecutive periods of work, a minimum of two weeks will be given prior to initiating additional work.
    - Sound walls and berms will be constructed prior to opening lanes to traffic
    - Maintenance yards, batch plants, haul roads, and other construction-oriented operations would be located where least disruptive to the community.
    - Community informational meetings would be held.
    - No pile driving would occur weekdays between the hours of 7:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., on weekends, or on any State or Federal holidays.

- Portable noise screens would be used to provide shielding for generators or other similar portable construction equipment when work is close to noise-sensitive areas.

- To mitigate potential visual impacts:
    - Noise barriers shall consist of landscaped berms wherever possible.
    - Where the right-of-way is too narrow for only a berm, a berm/retaining wall would be used.
    - Where berms are entirely infeasible, sound walls would be vegetated on one or both sides where possible.
    - Where needed, retaining walls with aesthetic treatments would be used.
    - Where a safety barrier is required, a 0.6 meter (2 feet) wide or greater planting area would be provided where possible.
    - Sound walls would use architectural detailing to add visual interest and reduce the apparent height of the walls.
    - In areas where retaining walls must be placed near the traveled way, a 1.8 meter (6 foot) wide planting pocket would be provided where possible.
    - Retaining walls over 5 meters (16 feet) in height would be terraced and planted as appropriate.
    - Retaining walls would be placed mid slope, wherever possible, to provide a buffer area for landscape screening.
    - Retaining walls would generally follow the slope contours with a constant elevation at the top with room at the base for a landscape buffer.
    - Architectural features, textures and colors would be used on walls. These features include pilasters and caps to provide shadow lines. These features will provide relief from the monolithic appearance and will reduce the apparent scale of the walls. Features would be designed with the concurrence of the District Landscape Architect.

- Bridge design would include architectural features as developed in the corridor design themes developed by the District Landscape Architect. Lighting, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and other urban amenities on local street portions of bridges shall be consistent with community values and goals.

- Landscaping would be consistent with the appearance of the adjacent community.

- Existing oleanders located in the median north of Citracado Parkway, that require removal, shall be replaced by new oleanders planted in a raised bed between the median barriers.

- To preserve desirable views and reduce the visual scale of the freeway facility, median barriers would be selected with the concurrence of the District Landscape Architect.

- Grading shall utilize techniques such as slope rounding and variable gradients, where possible.

- Construction related fugitive dust would be controlled through the use of best management practices (BMP) during construction and after construction is complete. These measures include proper handling of exposed soil, covering trucks when transfering material, wheel wash stations, and revegetating unused areas.

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Date